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ABSTRACT

Based on the premise that portfolios form part of a process to enable the teacher more truly to become a facilitator, this report presents the narratives of an 8th-grade reading workshop teacher and a 12th-grade honors course teacher. The report begins with a brief section explaining the principles of the project. The format of the report is a rearrangement of these teachers' narratives into a topical framework interspersed with comments by Alan Purves. Sections of the report discuss the context for the work, getting students started through negotiation, developing a mentoring strategy, and judging and grading. The report concludes that teachers need to balance the tendency to do things for students with the tendency to serve as the judge, and that this duality is the crux of the portfolio approach. Contains eight references and a goals chart. (RS)

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# Using Portfolios to Negotiate a Rhetorical Community

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The literature on portfolios has grown exponentially over the past decade, but most of the focus has been on writing, on elementary and college levels, and on issues related to assessment (Purves, 1993; Tierney, Carter, & Desai 1991; Wiggins, 1989; Wolf, Bixby, Glenn, & Gardner, 1991). The focus in this paper is less on the practice of assessment (that is, the ways by which scores or grades are assigned to work) than on the larger questions of process and responsibility. We have found that portfolios are a powerful tool for changing the whole focus of instruction, learning, and classrooms so that the teacher is no longer the one who controls the situation through the presentation of material and the consequent assigning of some order of merit to the performance of the students. The teacher may still set forth the general conditions for learning and the broad goals of the course or class, but the students set their own goals within those confines, negotiate these with the instructor so as to determine their intended learning, monitor their progress, and finally assess what they have learned for themselves. Within this framework, the students are treated as intelligent persons whose education in part involves an understanding and acceptance of the norms and standards of the rhetorical community with all of its conventions and common standards (Purves, 1992). The portfolio, in short, is not an assessment tool like a performance test or a statewide examination. Rather, it forms part of a process to enable the teacher more truly to become a facilitator, to allow the teacher to get into the background. This report focuses on how that is done, and, following a brief section explaining the principles of the project in which we are engaged, will be based upon the narratives of Marian Galbraith and John Hennelly, the first of whom was working with an eighth-grade reading workshop, and the second with a twelfth-grade honors course.[1] The narratives are thus rationalized into a

[1] The format of the report will be to rearrange Marian's and John's narratives into a topical framework and to intersperse segments of their narrative with comments by Alan Purves. The authors of the narratives are identified by their initials.

procedural document, suggesting a way in which two distinct approaches to negotiation may take place but at the same time suggesting the importance of context in making the procedure come into fruition.

**The Context for the Work**

Based on our reading of various articles and books on portfolios and on our discussion among a larger group of twelve teachers at seven schools,[2] we agreed early in the project that portfolios are not just nice but necessary to the teaching of English. We came up with a set of principles to guide our work that hold beyond the local and may be useful to other teachers:

1. A portfolio is meant to present the student to the outside world.
2. A portfolio should seek to reflect the breadth of the student's accomplishments.
3. A portfolio should seek to justify the particular course or curriculum that the student has undertaken.
4. A portfolio should be the responsibility of the student.
5. A portfolio has a rhetorical purpose: to inform and to persuade.
6. Creating a portfolio is formative evaluation; the portfolio itself is summative evaluation.

It is the fourth principle that will be elaborated in this report, but it must be seen in the context of the other five. The thrust of those five is that the portfolio is a product created and arranged by the student to represent the individual accomplishments of that student to an outside world. It is more than a folder or a collection of writings; it has a rhetorical purpose; it is a complex argument concerning that student as reader and writer; it should be comprehensive; and it should be assembled over a period of

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[2] The work took place within a larger project on portfolios in the literature classroom, Grades 6-12, supported by the National Research Center on Literature Teaching and Learning, located at The University at Albany, SUNY. In that project, 12 teachers in New York and Connecticut were involved in an exploration of portfolios in instruction.

time, with the assistance of the teacher who acts as a coach until the point at which the student says, "I'm ready to be judged."

A portfolio should be created by the students. It may have guidelines from the school or teacher about the kinds of things that might be included (or must be included), such as a number of kinds of writing, a self-evaluation, a list of books read, or a number of original compositions or performances (film, music, writing). (We do not see English language arts or writing as limited to tradtional text production.) But the decision as to what specific pieces are to be included and how they are to be arranged should remain the students'. They must also work out how best to put group work into the portfolio. If it is a project that involves the building of a model, they might have to use photographs. If there is a dramatization, there might be an audio tape or a videotape. If there is a really good discussion, the students should figure out how to put that into the portfolio, how to show why it is good, and what part they took in it. The students are laying themselves on the line—before the whole school perhaps, or before a jury of teachers. It is their choice as to whether they should be seen as uncaring or prideful. Teachers cannot do this for them. By taking responsibility for what they show of themselves to the world, students have a new power that they don't have when they are simply handing things in and getting grades. It takes time for them to realize that they are not helpless—that they earn the grade or the rating, a teacher does not give it to them.

**Getting the Students Started through Negotiation**

If these are the general outlines and goals of portfolios, how does one proceed to get students to shift to this new view of themselves? The solution we see is to practice the delicate art of negotiation. The teachers and the institution have a set of standards experienced in a curriculum. The students have a set of aims for survival in the system. Rather than simply present the curriculum and say "do it," the negotiating teacher seeks to lead or nudge the students towards the social goals and also encourage the students to form their own view of those goals and then begin to see how the institution and the individual can become a viable community in which group and individual are each represented. The first step appears to be that of dealing clearly and honestly with the students concerning goals. As Marian writes:

> My first tentative moves toward negotiation took place over goal setting. Teachers have always known the goals. Whether they are the formal goals of our system curricula or the informal goals which develop throughout our school year, it is imperative that we reveal those

goals to our students. We reveal them not to inform them of the goals to which we will herd them, but so they can determine, within certain parameters, the pathways they will travel with their own learning. These goals become the foundation upon which students build their portfolios.

When I instituted the use of portfolios as part of the middle school reading program, my students and I began by negotiating the responsibility for setting goals. My first offer to students was an outline of the curricular goals rewritten to be comprehensible to students. I asked them to choose the curricular areas toward which they were ready to move. In addition, I asked them to consider personal goals—ones that I may not have considered—and to set goals for themselves. What I discovered was that students had long ago given up on understanding my motives and were more than willing to submit themselves to my will. The goals they developed, more often than not, consisted of "getting better grades," "writing better responses," or "getting work done on time"—all goals designed to return the control to the teacher. This student's goal is an example of such a goal:

> *Some of my goals as an eighth grader is* [sic] *to get better grades than I did in seventh grade. The reason why I think this is an important goal is because it will help me later on during high school or even college. Not only that, but most importantly, I want to do it for myself. When I get good grades on my report cards, I feel real good about myself. Another thing I want to do as an eighth grader is to write better entries. Often I find myself writing too much detail and I would like to stop that and write more response and explanation.*

Since this type of goal was far too common my next proposal was that goals be more closely tied to curricular goals. I made out of the system's curricular goals a Reader's Profile. This was a list of indicators which might serve as evidence of what eighth grade students should know or be able to do. These indicators were grouped into five goal areas: Stretching Your Reading Experience, Responding to Books, Understanding How Books Work, Understanding How an Author Writes, and Gathering Information. Within each of these goal areas were curriculum objectives which students could use as indicators of their strength or weakness within a given goal area.

For instance, for the goal area Responding to Books, students used the reader's profile to consider whether the following were ways they responded to books:

- used their own experiences to understand characters and situations in books
- connected the issues in a book to the lives of others or the world around them
- compared different books or genre
- used their own experiences, knowledge of other books, or details in the book to make and revise predictions about the plot, characters, or theme
- used art, music, graphs, drama, or discussion to respond to books
- wrote about their struggles—what was confusing or hard to understand

Students were able to review the list and determine whether these were things they did rarely, sometimes or usually. Although most students were familiar with these strategies for responding to

books, others often found themselves literally unable to think about anything to say about a book. They lacked ways of thinking about or responding to books. By completing their own reader's profile, students could see which goal areas might be most accessible and could explore ways to reach those goals. In this way, we reached a point of compromise in our negotiations. As teacher I was satisfied that the goals fell within the curricular parameters, but the students determined which of those goals were important to and necessary for them. They had taken a giant step toward taking responsibility for learning by committing themselves to specific achievable goals. Instead of the vague goals chosen earlier, students were more likely to choose goals like this one:

> *My goal for this quarter is to work on making and revising predictions as I read, because I haven't been doing that a lot. Usually I just read faster to find out what happens and end up missing a lot of things that may be important to a story. This way I'll be able to read slower so I won't miss out on anything.*
>
> *My plan to prove that I'm meeting this goal is to write the predictions in my journal entries.*
>
> **M. G.**

The point that can be gleaned from Marian's narrative is that the teacher sets forth and clarifies the goals of the curriculum; but the students need to personalize those goals to put them in their own language or put their own "twist" on them so as to make them meaningful. In doing so they may also see the level at which they can best operate (to make the predictions at all before making detailed ones). Some students may be new to English and to the American culture, some may have been writing on their own for quite some time. Their goals need to be set within a level or band of expectation and operation (using words like "better" or "more"), rather than to a single, unyielding criterion (Purves, 1993).

Another aspect of the clarification of goals deals with the initial negotiation of criteria. A goal may be specified, but unless there is also clarity as to how one knows when it will be reached, it remains somewhat inert in the students' minds. In writing, particularly, we have found the use of a detailed scoring rubric has a pedagogical advantage in that it enables the teacher to specify what is being looked at by judges of writing (Purves and Hawisher, 1990). By giving a clear and specific rubric at the beginning of instruction, a teacher is able to share concepts and language to talk about students writing with them and to have them talk with each other about writing. John describes it this way:

> During my first few years' teaching, I responded enthusiastically to students' writing, pointing to its merits, downplaying its flaws. If writing was their task, grinning and bearing it was mine. Even in my mid '70s peer evaluative classes we rarely moved beyond the *what I like,*

*what I'd like to know more about* rubric. Students still knew that I was the only one who would or could provide the straight dope. In short, they did not direct their own writing development. Here is what I wasn't doing often or effectively enough:

- encouraging students to identify specifically some elements of good writing;
- helping students set specific writing goals based on those elements;
- providing them with instruction and models specific to achieving those goals;
- expecting students to participate in assessing their success in meeting those writing goals.

I may have overlooked these procedures due to inexperience. Perhaps such considerations as development, explication, style, and organization were just becoming clearer to me; perhaps I was unable able to convey these to students effectively; perhaps, like many of my colleagues, I believed the ability to write was as much talent as it was learned behavior; perhaps I believed that covering the content of a literature- and mechanics-driven program left little room for negotiating the writing curriculum.

Since then I have reconsidered and revised my writing pedagogy, adapting and developing techniques to help students improve their writing. I have come to believe that young and inexperienced writers can improve by identifying what they wish to achieve in their work. This realization evolved through trial and error, lots of writing and talking to students about their writing, experimenting with models and forms, having students assess my courses and methods, and, most important, using writing folders and writing portfolios.

The chief focus of my instruction has been challenging students to assume greater control and responsibility for their learning. And in the past few years that challenge has become increasingly a process of negotiation—negotiation among student, teacher, and curriculum.

As have many teachers of English, I have often asked students to describe their growth as writers, the changes they have observed in their written work. Generally, their responses have been disappointing. At the middle school:

*I use more description. I know how to use commas, and I can write longer stories.*

At the high school:

*I use more description. My grammar has improved. I know how to organize.*

Obviously, there is little qualitative or quantitative difference between many 13- and 18-year-olds' commentaries. Does this explain the high school student's frustration at writing? It's difficult to feel good about something you've failed to improve at during the past four years. If teachers have difficulty seeing proof of progress in their students' writing—instructors trained to discern shifts in anything from homophones to t-units—imagine how much more discouraging it is for the learner.

It seemed to me that helping students use language effectively to describe or direct their writing could give them greater control and understanding of the process and craft. But developing this lexicon required more than mere naming of parts. And it involved more than clearly presented

teacher models and frequent student and teacher practice. It required students' using and owning this language to describe and improve their own and others' writing. It required fuller student engagement and a different kind of teacher engagement. If students and teacher were to succeed, they needed to become vested members in a larger writing and learning community.

Several years ago, I began exploring portfolio applications in hopes of vitalizing what was for my students, my colleagues, and myself a very passive and inconsequential writing folder procedure. To encourage students to look more closely at their work, I initially developed and used assessment forms like this one:

**Senior Literary Analysis Scoring Sheet**
writer:
date:
1. reasoning and development: **/50**
- How clearly has the writer established purpose and focus?
- Has the writer maintained this focus and thoroughly explored theme or question?
- Has the writer focused on theme and interpretation rather than on story?

**2. organization: /20**
- Within paragraphs, has the writer clearly organized information?
- Has the writer clearly connected paragraphs, being especially careful in making transitions from one work to the next?
- Is the overall design of this essay clear and logical?

**3. style: /15**
- Has the writer varied sentence beginnings and sentence lengths?
- Has the writer chosen appropriate language (phrasing and diction)?
- Has the writer maintained consistent tone?

**4. mechanics: /15**
- Has the writer avoided usage errors?
- Has the writer used the correct APA citation format?
- Punctuation?
- Spelling?

While models like this offered a comprehensive assessment guide, the criteria were still largely teacher-determined, and little if any negotiation was involved. I was simply trying to find descriptive language and illustrate qualities I hoped students would bring to their writing. Consequently, although they were willing to apply the criteria, they may have been discouraged for several reasons:

- the the 15- to 50-point scales were unmanageable;
- the number of criteria were overwhelming;
- students were at different developmental stages.

Though designed by me for my students, the form was nondiscriminating.

In retrospect I may have overcompensated for students' inability or reluctance to look at their work critically. Like many teachers, I wanted my students to understand and apply a common language (development, organization, style, and mechanics); however, in my effort to explicate these four descriptors, I'm afraid I left some students in the dust.

My challenge then was to help students identify qualities that they felt were important to effective writing and to apply these as they saw fit. Recently I asked two groups of students to review their second portfolio submissions and identify the elements or criteria that they valued in good writing. One group compiled this list:

- be flexible
- imagination
- developing ideas/organization (clearly)
- correct constant mechanics
- focus/purpose
- attractive to reader (can relate)
- flows well
- detail
- self-satisfaction
- use of quotes
- dialogue
- paint a picture
- imagery
- strong opening/closing
- less is more (essay writing)
- good use of humor
- don't write about something you know nothing about
- don't leave reader hanging
- transitions
- balance
- tone—be consistent
- word choice/don't repeat
- stay on task
- be personal
- underlying message
- be passionate/convincing/inspired

What this list reflects, as does that submitted by the other group, is an understanding and appreciation of writing. It reveals attention to those qualities outlined in my literary analysis form; however, it gives greater attention to affective concerns and to the writer's relationship to the reader. It also represents students' heightened awareness of what makes writing effective.

Having identified these qualities, students then discussed their own work, using these descriptors, caveats, and guidelines. Not surprisingly, their written assessments were more thorough, reflecting attention to qualities they hadn't previously considered. Granted, students

chose different descriptors and the exercise didn't lend itself to a linear, quantitative assessment, but this follow-up exercise suggested that students could write within a larger, richer frame of reference.

I believe these two exercises were critical in helping students and me begin to negotiate our roles and responsibilies in portfolio presentation and assessment. And although the quarterly portfolio design initially remained teacher-directed, with students' selecting from a limited collection of pieces (literature related and writing workshop related), I found myself asking for more written feedback about my service as a reader and facilitator and their progress with long- and short-range reading and writing goals. And even that quarterly design has changed, a process I'll discuss later.

What my students and I achieved was a redefinition of our roles as writers and readers. And again, although I was initially responsible for priming the pump with models and forms, the process gradually became a negotiated one through which students extended their understanding and use of descriptive language to direct and assess their and others' writing.

J. H.

Viewed over the course of time, John's approach is a classic example of negotiation, one that is clearly taken from the model for negotiation used by professional writers, publishers, and labor-management experts. The first step in the process of negotiation is one of realizing the otherness of others and then moving to sharing, both the sharing of goals and objectives and the sharing of criteria or standards (Purves, 1993). For John, it involes a set of steps: first being specific about one's own judgments that may have seemed almost automatic, and then recognizing that these need to be placed in relationship to the goals and understandings of the students. This step requires respecting the students. The goals may be general and focussed on process or more specifically centered on product. The spirit, however, is the same. In both goals and criteria, the teacher is a representative of a broader society, the literate culture of which the teacher is a representative and into which the students are passing (Kádár-Fülop, 1988; Purves, 1991), but at the same time sees the individual as worthy of sharing. The portfolio idea helps make that act of sharing and including apparent to all. The criteria and goals are used not as a barrier, but as a gateway. As in any negotiation, the positions and assumptions of the negotiations must be open and above board.

**Developing a Monitoring Strategy**

The setting and clarifying of goals is not accomplished overnight; rather, it is the first stage of a procedure that is carried on and modified throughout the period of

instruction. The clarification and elaboration of these goals takes shape in the work of the course, while the students are gathering the evidence that will eventually appear in their portfolio and monitoring their progress. Marian elaborates the working out of these steps in her class:

*Gathering evidence*

Once the students have set their goals, the portfolio became the record of goal attainment. Within it students compiled the evidence they needed to measure their progress. It would have been naive to assume that having set goals, students would take on the initiative to move unerringly toward them. The negotiation of responsibility continued as teacher and class experimented with ways to help them move toward their goals.

If students were ever to accept the responsibility for realizing their goals and building a portfolio, they had to understand two things. First, they had to realize that the portfolio belonged to them. They might show it to others, but it was *their* record of learning. I could not and would not presume to fill their portfolios. Each student had to make his or her own choices about what would be included.

Secondly, they had to learn how to make those choices. They had to begin to think of their own work as evidence of learning. Students needed to see that what they produced was tangible evidence of the ways they thought about books and their ability to express those thoughts. It was evidence of the ways they were learning to think about literature and writing. The process of assembling a portfolio required them to accumulate evidence and to make conscious decisions about the evidence they were collecting. A portfolio could no longer be simply a storage place. A piece would be selected for the portfolio based on its ability to provide evidence of learning. For most students this was new and difficult. They did not think that way about work.

Until this point students had been asked to evaluate their work based on certain criteria. As part of the reading program, students wrote journal entries and created various artifacts in response to their reading. In the past they were accustomed to looking at their work and determining whether it met previously disclosed criteria. Had they responded to the piece rather than simply summarized? had they explained their response? and had they provided enough details to anchor it in the text? They were able to recognize the difference between response and summary, a reasoned response and a general, nonspecific response, but they were unable to examine the nature of the response. They did not, for instance, notice when they had made the move from writing about their responses to the book to recognizing how the author had used language, events, or characters to evoke a response. They were unaccustomed to looking at their writing as tangible evidence of what they knew and could do in response to literature. It was only the teacher who had the power to see growth in the students' work. It was the responsibility of the teacher to recognize growth, record that growth (usually by assigning grades), and to point it out to students.

The first attempt to move students toward assuming that responsibility was to ask students to identify their best works—the literary log entries or projects—which were evidence of their attempts to meet their goals. Students were asked to reflect on those works and what they revealed about themselves as responders or learners. First responses, once again, were grounded in how an entry measured up to teacher expectations. Students were able to look at themselves as students

but not as learners. One student responded, "I worked really hard on my board game [a book project], and it shows I can meet deadlines," or from another, "I write a lot in my entries and I always answer any questions you ask about what I say." Yet another might say, "This is a good entry because it's all reaction and it's longer than I usually write."

Needless to say, we had not reached a settlement. As we continued to negotiate responsibility for the portfolio, two main strategies helped students think about their work as evidence. One of them was modeling. As teacher, one of my responsibilities was to respond to the students' literary log entries in writing or in conference. Just as I was asking students to think about what their entries revealed about them as readers and writers, I modeled the same behaviors myself. Student entries have always revealed a great deal to me about the kinds of readers who are in my classes. Now, in addition to responding to the issues they raised in their entries or asking questions to direct their attention to specific aspects of the text, I made explicit the ways I think about them as a result of their work. I peppered my responses and conferences with observations such as the pat on the back:

> *I love the way you talked about the author's word choice in his book. You're very aware of the way the author chooses words to help you 'see' the setting.*

or the nudge:

> *Your last few entries demonstrate that you understand the things that are happening in the story. You've retold a lot of it. Are there other goals you are tying to work toward with your reading and writing?*

Gradually, students started to assume some of the same types of thinking. One student chose this "best entry" and wrote this reflection, showing a move beyond retelling and writing that focuses on comparison

> *From* Treasure of Acapulco
> *The main character is Tony and now his parents want to move away from Acapulco. Tony doesn't want to. I don't think I'd want to either because it's a nice place because it's right on the water. Tony decides to go diving with a friend. They both go out from the beach with their scuba equipment on. I would love to go diving because it would be so exciting seeing the underneath world. When Tony was underneath the water he met up with a 6 ft hammerhead shark. I would have been scared to death if I was in the water with a shark. I really like this book a lot. I hope to finish the book soon because of how interesting it is.*
>
> *Reflection*
> *I think this is my best literary log entry of all the books I've read so far because I explained everything including the way I thought on different things. I even explained it from my point of view if I was in that situation. I think it shows about me as a reader because the person reading my entries can tell that I experience a lot of things in the book. I can relate what I would do and how I would feel about it. This quarter I've learned it's*

*not that important to just tell about the book. It's much more important to explain and respond to what you read.*

Peer response is the second strategy in negotiating student responsibility for gathering evidence. Students soon learn to ask their classmates the same types of questions we ask them. If during discussion one student offers the observation that a given book has two characters who are veterans of different wars and who have very dissimilar reactions to war, another student will ask why the reader thinks the author wrote the book that way. A third student will offer a guess as to what the meaning might be, and the discussion unfolds. In this way students model the types of dialogues that should take place in literary logs and in conferences.

By asking students to read the entries of others and notice what those reveal about their peers as readers, students begin to practice the type of reflection we want them to apply to their own work. "Dear _____," one student wrote to another, "your goal says that you are going to learn more about how authors create characters and how they change, but all you wrote about is what was happening in the story." That nudge helped the writer to use his next entry to focus on his goal.

*Time*

The most important part of these negotiations lay in making explicit to students the connection between their writing and their goals, helping them to see their work as evidence of their learning. For this I had to put my best offer on the table—time. If I was going to ask students to take on the gathering of evidence, I had to provide them with time to reflect. At frequent and regular times throughout our months, marking periods, or year, I had to set aside the time for students to review once again their goals and assess their progress. They needed to get into the habit of taking out their portfolios, rereading their goals, and instead of mentally guessing at whether or not they'd progressed with them, finding the tangible evidence of progress, neglect, or accomplishment. Based on these periodic checks, goals were reestablished or modified.

This was a time-consuming process. It meant carving time out of what already seemed to be an impossibly short teaching year. This was especially difficult in a workshop where students work according to their own time schedules. It required my near-constant creation and revision of tools which would help students to become independent in their use of the portfolio. The Reader's Profile mentioned earlier was kept in the portfolio so students could easily refer to the curricular goals. Through trial and error I developed forms intended to help students record progress and goal attainment in a simple way.

I finally settled on a Goals Chart. As students finished reading and responding to each of their books, they measured their responses against the goal, reinforcing the connection between the literary response and the personal goals. They looked for evidence to support their work toward the goal. As students become more independent in gathering evidence, the portfolio fit more easily into the flexible schedule of a workshop. Figure 1 represents one student's use of a Goals Chart as close to a reading log.

FIGURE 1
GOALS CHART

Name _____

Goal: Understanding what a lead means in the book

| Date | Progress | What needs to be done | Evidence |
|---|---|---|---|
| 4/19 | When I pay attention to the lead I better understand how the lead affected the story | at end tell how the story is going to be | entry 3/31 |
| **Date** | **Progress** | **What needs to be done** | **Evidence** |
| 5/1 | The setting and the intro. to the characters are in the leads so I know more about them | tell in the entry the final description of the setting | entry 4/20 |
| **Date** | **Progress** | **What needs to be done** | **Evidence** |
| 5/11 | The lead in the book got me into it. It made me notice the book. | Decide in the lead if I will like the book or not | entry 5/3 |
| **Date** | **Progress** | **What needs to be done** | **Evidence** |
| 5/19 | I have learned that a good lead doesn't mean the book will be good | same thing as last time | entry 5/11 |
| **Date** | **Progress** | **What needs to be done** | **Evidence** |
| 6/2 | That a lead in a sequel will remind you of all that happened in the last book | use more than entry to prove progress | entry 5/18 |

This same student used his Goals Chart to write:

> *My goal for this quarter was thinking about how leads affect the story as it went on. To keep up with this goal I have paid close attention to the leads because in the beginning of stories you get the first descriptions about the character. So you can compare yourself to most of the characters by their first descriptions. But if I don't find anything there I read on to find more about the plot and other characters having to do with the story. And also leads can tell you how the book will be through out the rest of the book. Or give a summary of past events if it is a sequel. I think the lead and the ending are the most important parts of a story if you don't want to be confused about the middle.*
>
> *I think that my goals were met for this quarter because I always would read through my entries when I finished to remember each of the ways I showed improvement on each of the goal but also I don't think I showed my goal in any other ways than by entries. Maybe I could ... have drawn a picture to represent the comparison.*

But no matter how independent students became, I was not able to avoid the fact that the use of portfolios meant taking time from some aspect of the reading program. In my case, I decided that I could afford to ask students to respond to literature a little less so that they could respond more to themselves as learners. Underlying this decision was the belief that the portfolio is not simply another grading system, but a process which will help students to see themselves as learners, readers, and writers. Step by step, students came to understand the purpose of the work they did. They were able to take pride in their own growth because they could see it. And in successively greater ways they came to understand the nature of interpretation. Said one student whose goal had been to move away from her previous diet of formula mysteries,

> *It isn't enough for me to read mysteries anymore, I need something to think about. I didn't like books with description before, but now I like description because it helps me to understand the places and the people.*

Teachers often lament not being able to see the results of their work. Gathering evidence can change that—for teachers and students. Both parties can win at the bargaining table.

**M. G.**

Marian's point about time is, perhaps, one of the more crucial points to make. We think of time in school as being *instructional* time, a term that implies that we as teachers use the time to divulge our lore or to engage in the kinds of seminars and conversations that we enjoy. The term makes it *our* time. In the reconstruction of the classroom betokened by portfolios, the time is practice time for the students—learning time, not instructional time. Many teachers at first find they are losing the comfort of the familiar routine and they worry about the portfolio as taking away from the class time that they had been used to seeing in their portfolios. Time becomes *student* time.

Marian, however, points out that the time spent in gathering and assembling evidence is a time spent in the workshop seemingly self-managed by the students. The classroom becomes indeed a workshop, an atelier of people developing and practicing their craft. The classroom does not look familiar to some teachers and observers, because things don't seem to be going on. Anyone who has worked with an art class or in some sports, however, knows that much intense work is going on there. The students are all engaged in the activity of writing whatever it is they are writing, and the teacher becomes much more of a resource than a traditional pedagogue.

**The Results of Negotiation: Assembling the Portfolio**

While engaged in gathering the evidence, the students have an eye towards the day when the evidence will be put together into a portfolio. The students have an eye to the product. In the case of John Hennelly's classroom, the assembly takes place quarterly, with a chance on each occasion for change and reorganization to form a cumulative annual portfolio:

> Striking a balance between curricular expectations and student preferences is the key to assembling the portfolio. The first quarterly assessment form, one which I have since revised but which remains more teacher-directed and course-dependent, specifies those criteria I want students to consider. Again, while subsequent forms have become more student-directed, students' inexperience with self-directed writing and portfolio preparation argues against my making the first quarter's structure more open-ended. Here then is my initial effort at striking this balance:
>
> **ENGLISH IV 1st Portfolio 10/31/91**
>
> name:
>
> I would like you to submit three pieces of this term's writing. One should be a writing workshop submission. Please submit a variety of work, your writing workshop plan along with earlier assessment forms and comments.
>
> - summer book review:
>
> lead:
> development:
> organization:
> style:
> mechanics:

*(continued on next page)*

- comparison and contrast essay:
  - effective use of format:
  - citations from text:
  - development:
  - style:
  - mechanics:
- survey write-up:
  - umbrella:
  - three significant findings:
  - wrap-up/extension:
  - mechanics:
- literary or character analysis:
  - development:
  - organization:
  - citations:
  - style:
  - mechanics:

Notes:

- All finished pieces should be word processed or typed.
- Please attach the completed writing workshop plan and writing workshop evaluation sheet with the first term's submissions.
- Your writing portfolio and summary and assessment pieces constitute 50% of your first term grade.

During my first years' exploring portfolio preparation and assessment, I asked students to submit three or four pieces each quarter. For the first term I might ask for two pieces related to course readings (e.g., a literary analysis and an imitative piece) and a writing workshop piece of the student's choosing. The second term's portfolio might include a college essay, a three-way literary analysis, and a self-selected piece. I also asked seniors to submit newspaper articles, at least two yearly. They elected the type and the time.

I liked and to some extent still use this approach to portfolio assessment for these reasons:

- It offers evidence—to any and all concerned—that students have achieved course objectives.
- It implies that breadth and versatility in writing are important.
- The criteria include the essentials of effective writing: development, organization, style, and mechanics.
- It provides students with opportunities to revise or polish work a second or third time;
- It invites students to discuss their work objectively.
- It gives students and me opportunities for planning and goal setting.

The process, as reflected in the forms, evolves during the course of the year—and over recent years—to reflect a greater degree of student direction and control. Consider this fourth quarter form recently developed and used with a heterogeneously mixed class of high school juniors:

**Modern American Literature**
**4th Quarter Portfolio**
**June, 1994**

**In choosing and discussing the selections for your fourth quarter portfolio, please keep these goals and considerations in mind:**

- Your portfolio should reflect your best efforts at reading and writing.
- It should demonstrate the range of your reading and writing interests and achievements; therefore, it may include selections from classes other than this one.
- It should reveal your growth as a reader and writer this year.
- It should demonstrate your ability to discuss your reading and writing.
- It should reveal those skills, beliefs, and understandings that you consider are essential to being an effective reader and writer.

**This portfolio differs from previous portfolios in at least two ways:**

- Your next year's English teacher will be reading it, possibly over the summer.
- Besides you and me, at least one other person whom you choose will read and comment on it.

**Procedures:**

1. Write a short introductory note, briefly noting the highlights of your portfolio. **(10%)**
2. Next, select and discuss a range and variety of your written work. Your selections may include—but are not limited to—the following: research papers, persuasive essays, literary analyses, imitative pieces, poetry, comparative essays, summaries & assessments (technical writing), expository essays, newspaper articles, short stories, personal narratives, reviews, and reader responses. For each piece selected, please discuss in detail what it reflects about your writing and reading skills, habits, development, and interests. If you prefer to use those criteria specified on previous portfolio guidelines (focus, development, organization, style, and mechanics), please do; however, keep in mind that this is *your* portfolio and should be discussed as such. **(60%)**
3. With one of these selections be sure to submit notes and drafts that show how you developed and revised it. Briefly discuss your writing process. Be candid, but give it careful consideration. **(10%)**
4. Include another reader's discussion or assessment of your portfolio. Remember: you select the reader, and you select the criteria that person uses in discussing your portfolio. Although it would be nice, this portion of your portfolio does not have to be typed or wordprocessed. It must simply be written or recorded. **(10%)**
5. Conclude by assigning a grade to this portfolio, based on its overall quality (A = superior, excellent; B = good, solid; C = OK but less than what it could be; D = poor,

last-minute-hardly-worth-the-effort). Then discuss the kinds of reading and writing you would like to or are willing to focus on next fall. Try to be specific and honest, keeping in mind that this will be the plan you begin with come September. **(10%)**

**Note:** As in the past the portfolio grade will determine 50% of your quarter grade.

Some teachers may find these forms restrictive. I find them helpful, as I believe my students do. They provide us with opportunity to assess and refine our efforts. And to the extent that I have invited students to adapt the assessment to their tastes and needs, more students are willing to treat portfolio preparation and assessment more thoughtfully and thoroughly.

For the past two years, I have included an additional section to the quarterly assessment, one which also gives students a chance to reflect on both theirs and my efforts:

**Related questions:**

a. How well have you kept us with the reading assignments, dialectical notetaking, and extended responses?
b. In what ways are you improving as a writer? Be candid. If you don't see improvement, say so.
c. Others in and beyond this class have commented on your writing. What have you found helpful? Not helpful?
d. What would you like me to be looking at in your writing during second term?
e. Other thoughts or suggestions?

To some degree these questions—questions about plans, the course, the quality of instruction—are there to draw students closer to their work and to me, to help them take more control and interest in their writing and reading. As I hope to illustrate shortly, students' willingness to discuss and go beyond these questions has helped make portfolio preparation and assessment a more constructive, collaborative, and valuable activity.

**J. H.**

As John notes, the use of an initially structured form that evolves into a framework for a student-controlled portfolio becomes a part of the instructional strategy that initiates the negotiated final portfolio. The framework recognizes the reality of grades, making periods, and school administrators, but within that framework, control has developed to the students—audit is control in fact and not simply in name. Marian puts it this way:

*Assembling the portfolio*

Deciding what to put in the portfolio may have been the stickiest point in these negotiations. It was the hardest area in which to reach compromise because was the linchpin on which all the other "settlements" rest. If I really wanted the students to be responsible for the

portfolio, then I had to let them assume ownership of it. In fact I had promised them that ownership. In doing so, I had let loose a host of new questions. Whose goals were to be represented—only the ones students had established? the goals I had tried to address through classroom instruction? or some combination? What would constitute evidence? Should I rely solely on the discretion of students? Could I enter items into the portfolio? Or should I offer suggestions? The answer to these questions rests on the same conceptual framework which underlies all negotiation—compromise.

When I began using portfolios, I thought of them as a way to use the students' own work to prove that they had met curricular goals—basically, an annotated checklist of dates, entries, and instances of student achievement. It was a position I had to give up early in the negotiations for two reasons. From a practical standpoint I simply did not have the time to create and annotate portfolios for 100-125 students. From a more important standpoint, an annotated checklist would not help students to become more aware of their learning or more familiar with their own thinking. My next thought was that the portfolio ought to be a way to capture those moments when a student makes a breakthrough in thinking or learning about literature. That was still a position heavily dependent on my insight into students.

I knew the student had to own this portfolio if it was to work, but I was not quite ready to abandon the portfolio solely to the students' own goals. My experience showed me that students were not yet able to anticipate in their goals all of the different things they might learn or the ways they might grow. On the one hand, I had spent a great deal of time helping students to independently set, monitor, and work toward their goals. On the other hand, I had a need to address their attention to some of the other types of learning which had taken place as a result of class activities. The compromise we reached was this. Students would have total control over that aspect of the portfolio which related to their goals, but I also asked that they consider growth or learning they might not have anticipated with their goals. What can you do now that you couldn't do before? What do you know now that you didn't know before? Even then, it was the students' responsibility to answer those questions.

To refresh their memories I provided them with a synopsis of the curricular goals we had addressed as part of whole class instruction. In one instance, our class had spent some time discussing both theme and conflict in books, the central part they played in books and how they were hinged. Several students had begun to address those literary elements in their responses and were thinking about them in new ways. I wasn't willing to let that evidence of learning go totally unrecorded. I asked students to find evidence not only of their learning related to their own goal but related to class activities. One student responded,

> *Another thing I've learned about was theme. When we first started doing themes, I thought it was going to be another lesson. I didn't even come close to realizing that there is so much hiding behind that little word. Now I understand what it means and can find a theme in a piece of writing. My evidence is the* War of Twins *entry.*

Again, student-teacher conferences played a large part in helping students to think about what they have done and what it means. But in the final analysis, the portfolios belong to the students and the power to make decisions about their contents rests with them.

M. G.

## Judging and Grading

As we wrote at the beginning of this paper, the portfolio is a public document, a performance, a set of evidence that is to be judged by someone. Without that performance it remains inert, and trivial in the mind of the student. The unjudged portfolio is a readerless text (Purves, 1993). When it is presented to an audience, the audience is there to assess it. The form of the assessment may vary and even the sorts of assessors or jurors may vary, but the fact of assessed performance is crucial to the negotiation of responsibility. The performance makes the whole exercise meaningful to the students. Here is Marian's approach to that fateful time:

The bottom line in portfolio assessment was, in our case, the grade. It has taken a long time to wean students from their need for teacher grades and as long as the system remains the same they will never be weaned. For this course, grades were dependent on the student's performance. In terms of work load there were minimal criteria students must meet to achieve a minimum grade, but students were well aware that in order to earn any higher grade, they had to be able to prove effort and improvement. The portfolio was the vehicle through which they made their case. The students used their own work to determine a grade and then prepared a case to support that grade using their portfolios. I then validated their assessment and assigned the negotiated grade. There was perhaps no stronger bargaining chip than this in getting students to assume the responsibility for their portfolios.

I compared portfolio assessment to the courtroom dramas we see on TV. I reminded students of Perry Mason labeling the evidence "Exhibit A" and asked students when writing about their learning to refer to their evidence. As a class, we discussed the fact that, at least on television, the jury can only consider the evidence the lawyer puts before them. Then I asked students to act as lawyers in their own defense. And although in reality I assumed a dual role as both judge and legal assistant, helping them to locate and establish the proof of their case, it was up to the students to lay the evidence not only before the teacher but before themselves. Knowing that they would decide which evidence went before the court, knowing throughout the quarter that they were, in fact, responsible for creating that evidence, was a powerful motivational tool.

To some extent, there was also security in portfolio assessment. As students learned to see themselves in their own work, some of the bewildering mystery was taken out of learning. With pride they could point to their successes and with understanding they could assess what still needed to be done and the steps they would take to accomplish it.

Moving students to that point—the point at which they can set their own goals, gather their evidence, assemble their portfolio and assess themselves—was not easy. It was a process of small steps taken by both teacher and students as we negotiated a common ground. But it was a process well worth the effort, and as with any negotiation, the result was one both parties could live with.

**M. G.**

John approaches the time of assessment in a similar vein but with a difference; it is a time when the class functions as a rhetorical community:

As did portfolio preparation itself, the assessment procedures evolved over recent years. That evolution represents a movement toward more student-directed assessment and came about gradually as both students and I began to look beyond the syllabus of our particular English course.

The first example, a senior's April 1993 portfolio assessment, illustrates the method I used for several years. Students discussed the merits of each self-selected course-related piece and in turn I reacted to their discussion, based on my readings of their work. When views differed, and they occasionally did, I became the judge. I did not ask students to assign grades. The sample June 1994 junior portfolios reflect that shift toward greater student independence and autonomy. Students selected work from various sources, personal and academic, and in several instances pieces from previous years. For me, this approach entailed giving up some control, reading some material for the first time and following student's lead. For students, it meant demonstrating their ability to assess their work critically, freshly, and convincingly. It also required their identifying the criteria on which each selection should be assessed, finding an additional reader (friend, parent, sibling, another teacher), and getting that reader to discuss *in writing* the selections. Finally, it required students' proposing grades based both on the quality of the selections and the quality of theirs and the other reader's discussions. I still took the last turn, assessing and responding to the selections and both parties' assessments. In most instances I agreed with the grade. Given the amount of preliminary and preparatory work, it wasn't surprising that grades were strong. If negotiating learning means giving students more of the tools and skills necessary to direct and achieve their learning goals, then this second procedure appears to be moving me and my students toward an effective and amicable relationship.

Here are the excerpts from the April 1993 senior. The descriptors are boldfaced, the student's comments italicized, my comments plain-faced:

**English IV 3rd term self-assessment**
**Name:** *Karen*

**A. Portfolio: Briefly discuss each of your portfolio pieces. (In addition to considering development, focus, organization, style, and mechanics, also review your goals for this term.)**

**1. Imitative Piece:**

Sonnet 1: *I really fell in love with E. B. White's "Sonnet" and I liked the way he compared the forming of frost to the way his lover is pictured in his soul. I compared light to God and the love and faith he restores in us. White used many lines with an extra syllable so it is different from most sonnets. Anyway, I'm pleased with the outcome. I fixed the rough parts that you had suggested I change as best I could.*

Your sonnet works well. You should set off "an everlasting" with commas. And "long elated" might also be worth a re-visit. An impressive job. You avoid end-stop deftly.

*His first sentence in "Tickets, Please" was unusually long and I thought I might give it a try. The focus is there and as for development I used a good example of form fitting function.*

The Lawrence imitation works syntactically. A tighter beginning might be more effective in light of the specific "soldier" and "cabin" references. You may be mixing metaphors a bit.

**2. Literary Analysis:**

Mansfield & Lawrence: *I compared their different views on the misunderstanding of people. I developed my arguments and made very close observations, citing many lines. Focus and organization stayed on track. (Also, I used the APP form for my revised draft.)*

Can't argue with anything here. Well, maybe an agreement error in the last paragraph. Excellent, thorough analysis.

**3. Other:**

Journalistic Piece: *This is one of my favorite articles this year. I focus on a scholarship question and develop my arguments as I go on. I got my point across in an effective manner with an objective view.*

Agreed. This has style and substance.

**4. How well have you planned for and used writing workshop time?**

*O. K.*

You seem to use your time well. Wish we could give more time to writing workshop.

**B. Writing Assessment: We're moving into the last quarter of senior English. As you review your writing this year, how would you describe its development? Where have you seen improvement or change? Where would you like to see development? What do you suppose would bring about this development?**

*I definitely feel my writing this year has improved from last year's. Its development has come a long way. I've seen improvement in my literary analysis ("Nature of Man" and "Mansfield and Lawrence"). I've published four articles in the paper, each one on a totally different subject. Variety is not a problem. If I just keep up the writing, my development will expand even more.*

I'd agree with your assessment, Karen. I'd also encourage you to begin working on finer points: periodic and parallel structures, more concrete language. These will help you refine your work. You might want to look at Zinsser's *On Writing Well*.

**C. Course readings and reading log: Briefly assess how well you've kept up with readings and how helpful the writing response logs were or weren't.**
*I've kept up with the readings. The writing responses always prove helpful. The journal is nice to have handy. (good idea!)*
That's good to hear. Again, you put the reading log to fine use.

**D. Suggestions & Plans: What is working for you in this course? What isn't? How can you and I work best to make the last term more effective and valuable for you?**
*Everything is fine. I can't really think of anything that doesn't work for me. As for the last term, I'll just keep doing what I've been doing: improving my writing.*
Come on, you've got to have some complaints.
Karen, I'd agree with your assessments. Hope my suggestions make sense. Thanks for another fine portfolio submission.

Here are excerpts from two June 1994 juniors' assessments of their portfolio submissions (they are responding to the questions on pp.17-18):

**Modern American Literature**
**Fourth Quarter Portfolio**
**Name:** *Danielle*

Mothers' Motives: *I found it very hard to think of a topic for a paper on* Women of Brewster place. *I eventually came up with the thesis, but I wasn't sure how successful it would be. My first draft had a lot of holes in it and wasn't as focused as it could have been. When I revised it, I made a lot of changes that turned it into a strong piece. I feel it now has a pretty definite focus, with lots of supporting material. It holds a lot of my opinions, for I don't feel that parents should feel that their children own them anything, be it love or a second chance at childhood. I didn't really find any concrete answers, but I explored the topic well.*

Mrs. Ordinary: *This was a paper that I wrote in tenth grade. It is one of my favorite papers. The book* Ordinary People *was written from the husband's and the son's views, so I switched it and wrote from the Mother's view. Although I didn't really relate to Beth, I found it pretty easy to see her side. I think I kept her thoughts pretty true to her character. I enjoyed writing the part of Grace, because although I know there is no explanation for suicide, it helped me see some logic to it. I think one of the reasons I enjoyed this paper so much was that I explored different views and characters, and got to look at situations from many angles.*

Self-delusory Behavior: *I feel that the strongest aspect of this paper is that it is direct. The assignment called for at least eight pages, and although this paper is only about seven, it fully explores the question and develops it. I could have made it longer, but it just would have been "fluff". There is plenty of research that supports my paper, both primary and secondary, helping to explore the question. I enjoyed writing this paper because I like psychology and exploring different aspects and theories of it.*

*If I were to grade this portfolio, I would give myself an A. I feel that all the pieces included are of superior quality, and I think my critiques were to the point and honest.*

*Next year I would like to focus on creative writing, working on poetry and short stories. I am hoping to write for the paper, but I do not know what I want to do on that. I am also hoping to write one or two really strong college essays.*

*I don't know if I need to focus on anything in my reading. I feel that I am a thorough reader, so as long as the book is interesting I will finish it and usually enjoy it.*

**Modern American Literature**
**Fourth Quarter Portfolio**
**Name:** *Jeff*

*This 4th quarter portfolio is jam packed with 9 outstanding pieces of my writing. These works range in variety from a letter, speech, book review, research paper, newspaper article, summary and assessment, a small notice from the wall of a camping goods store, literary analyses, and finally an epitaph. Four of these pieces, the letter, speech, book review, and research paper were taken from my A.P. U.S. history class. The rest are from Modern American Literature. All of these selections in one way or another reflect my best efforts at reading, analyzing information, writing, and revising.*

The Speech: *This was a killer speech. I talked about how my character (General Douglas MacArthur) was one of the best examples the American character—with a little twist. During my three minute speech, I acted out several parts that really brought the class down. At one point, I used a foot stool from that "My body" assemlby and pretended it was a machine gun. This part is indicated by the ******. This speech shows my interest in acting. I love it when I can play another person. The importance of this speech is that I captivated my audience. Since I held my classes interest, which is the key of any speech, I could easily convince them with what I had to say. In writing, I always try to captivate the reader. Just look at my warning label. I feel this is very important because someone could easily fall asleep if what they are reading is boring. Hey, wake up!*

The Research Project: *This is my first research project and I'm very proud of my accomplishment. After three months of intensive research, writing, and revising, I finally*

*got this done. You wouldn't believe how happy I was. My experience with this project has told me that lots of work and effort are needed to come through. Lots of note cards will come in handy too. I guess 68 just didn't cut it. More important, as I said earlier, good comprehension of the topic is a must. After reading various sources with different views and information, understanding the topic is necessary to have a good research paper. Of course, no matter what you read you have to know what's going on to get anything out of it.*

The Newspaper Article: *I enjoyed writing this article. I felt like I was Dan Rather trying to get the big story. I gained two things out of this article. One, journalism is not that bad—as long as you have a good notepad and pen. Being caught off guard is not pleasant. Two, Joe does more than see to it that people don't beat each other up. Writing this article broadened my horizon. It helped develop my listening and not taking skills in addition to exploring an area of writing I never experienced, journalism.*

Summary and Assessment: *Writing this assessment told me one thing, I have bad usage. It's not that bad but it could be better. My solution, administer* Writers Inc. *to everyone. Specifically to teachers and students and have them go over it. This is probably the best english book that I have ever received. Those dinky vocab books were no good and neither were those spelling books in elementary school. This book has everything, even good illustrations. Don't think I'm getting off track by giving a book review on* Writers Inc. *I'm only assessing how to solve what I believe is a bad grammar problem. By allowing this book to become standardized in all schools, I believe everyone will have an improvement in their grammar. I like it, I've written a summary and assessment paragraph!*

Literary Analysis: *Love can be confusing. It has different degrees and forms. In this piece I got confused over the types of love the characters from the* The Women of Brewster Place *had in their lives. I tried to categorize love but as I said before, it has different degrees and forms. I guess confused isn't the right word for it but undeveloped may be better. I did not elaborate on the forms of love that existed in some of the character's lives. In some areas, my version of love was confusing and contradictory. However, after careful revision my piece become better developed. Just to show how much better, I have added my notes and drafts. One thing that has helped me in becoming a better writer is leaving my work for a while and coming back to it. This way, picking up errors will be more visible than trying to find them after several hours of writing. The mind tends to become less efficient and staring at a computer screen for long periods of time does not help.*

*I assign a grade between 87 and 97. Of course, I think my portfolio is awesome so I would give it an A but there may be some ingredients that are missing or undeveloped. I enjoyed reading all the books in english except for the* Spoon River Anthology. *I especially loved* Catcher in the Rye, A Yellow Raft on Blue Water, The Women of Brewster Place, *and*

Bean Trees. *I would like to read more books like the ones I have mentioned in the future. Why? Because they are good literature. What's good literature? I believe that good literature tells how people behave. To be more specific, how they deal with life. If a book can effectively relate to our everyday lives then it is good literature. I also believe that anything you enjoy reading is good literature.*

*As for what I would like to write in the future, I want anything that will help me succeed in college. That means I don't want a load of research projects to do. I don't care how much of a high I get when I finish them, they are very hard. I feel that summary and assessments, literary analyses, comparative essays, at the most two research projects, persuasive essays, and creative writing such as my Adolphe Broduer letter will help in preparing for college. I think writing workshop may not be a bad idea either.*

While all three students looked critically at their work, I believe that Danielle's and Jeff's submissions and assessments reveal a degree of independence that may be missing in my honors level senior's work. That these two were strong members of a mixed "standard level" class and Karen was perhaps the strongest member of an honors level class further convinces me that collaborating with students in developing and applying standards of quality is a viable, engaging, and effective way to advance literacy and the language arts.

**J. H.**

What both John and Marian have found about grading has been echoed by other teachers in the project. Through the process of negotiation, the students gather a sense of the operating criteria in the rhetorical community of the classroom and the school. Over the course of the year, they have gained a sense of what constitutes A or C+ work. As in other projects like this, the students generally can estimate their grade with a good deal of accuracy. This they do in their self-assessment which may take the form of a checklist like that which John's class uses or a narrative. It is this that forms the starting point for negotiating the grade. The students come to see that it is a combination of external standards and criteria and a sense of growth, development, or movement towards those criteria. The exact balance may vary from classroom to classroom, and in some cases from student to student within the classroom. The teachers have set forth what the curriculum expects of each student. The degree to which each student achieves those expectations is the basis for the grade. Grading thus becomes a relatively minor part of the negotiation; the lion's share has been accomplished in the first days and weeks of the class. The portfolio is not graded: rather it is the evidence that supports the student's judgment of the student's overall performance that is then validated by the teacher.

**Conclusion**

What are the results of negotiating responsibility in the writing classroom and giving goal-setting and assessment to the students as part of the total approach to their learning? One result, as the list on p. 8 indicates, is that the students demonstrate how the standards of the literate society become their own, how they have become members of the rhetorical community.

We believe we have shown that, during the course of teaching English, each teacher acts as the coach, the person who encourages the students to bring out their best, to elicit responses, discussion, and ideas and feelings. These may come out in discussions, in drafts of papers, in rehearsals of various sorts. Teachers are generally friendly creatures, helpful beasts in the traditional quest stories. At the same time, teachers let go of their control so as to be ready for that time when they must drop that role: when the students are showing their stuff for real, when they have to confront the dragon, and teachers are the dragon-judge or its surrogate. This is hard for many of us, and it is often hard for students, many of whom find it comforting to be dependent on teachers. But it is a shift in role that teachers must acknowledge in themselves and explain to their students. It is a shift that does not surrender the authority of rhetorical or interpretive community but, by negotiating allows for induction into that community.

How do teachers accomplish that shift? First, we think, by being brutally honest about criteria. There must be no surprises about what we are looking for and what our standards might be. We must announce these goals and standards from the first day of class. Then we must negotiate with the students how they can assume responsibility for meeting those criteria. We must appeal to their self-pride and their desire to "look good"; and we must slowly let them know that they are the ones who are responsible for their performance.

At all levels, teachers can and must at some point be the judges (unless they can get someone else to take on that role); they are the experts who can describe the performance of students and hold it up against standards that are agreed upon by teacher and student. They have to cast off the mantle of friendliness and look through the lens of the critic or the judge. This is not an inhumane act at all; it is an act of love, and teachers should try to help students realize it. Teachers can no longer be the parent/advocate, the attorney for the defense. They cannot rationalize their students' work; it must stand on its own.

That is the point at which students become independent, and it is a point towards which teachers must lead them so that they can be free and autonomous. We

think it is the hardest part of teaching, but probably the most important Teachers are seeking to have students become independent responsible human beings who no longer need a mentor. To effect this end, teachers need to balance the tendency to do things for the students with the tendency to serve as the judge. This duality is the crux of the portfolio approach, we think; it is also the crux of what it means to be a teacher. The fact of portfolios encourages us all to face ourselves as teachers and as human beings responsible for the education (the leading away from childhood) of students.

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